

**The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries,  
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 12

Finding Aid for

**International Missionary Union Records, 1893 – 1932**



1924 Annual Meeting, Clifton Springs N.Y. Credit to: MRL12 International Missionary Union Records 1893-1932 Records, box 1, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

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**Summary Information**

Creator: International Missionary Union  
Title: International Missionary Union Records  
Inclusive dates: 1893-1932  
Bulk dates: 1920-1928  
Abstract: International Missionary Union was an organization of international evangelical missions dedicated to diffusion of missionary intelligence, discussion of missionary topics, and increase of mutual acquaintance among missionaries of different churches and countries. Contains photographs, articles, member rolls and one Syriac language journal.  
Size: 2 OS boxes, 1 Manuscript box, 3.25 linear feet  
Storage: Onsite storage  
Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Email: [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance:** Originally part of the Independent Missionary Research Library, these records were moved with the MRL to the Brown Memorial Tower of Union Theological Seminary in 1929. In 1976, the records were accessioned to the Burke Library archives with the closure of the MRL.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by phone, fax or email [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu), as far in advance as possible.
- Access Restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, MRL 12: International Missionary Union Records, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### History

The International Missionary Union (IMU) was founded in 1884 in Niagara Falls, Ontario Canada. It was the brainchild of Rev. W.B. Osborn, pastor of a local Niagara Falls Church and former missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church in India. The Rev. John T. Gracey, D.D., also a former missionary in India organized the first week of missionary meetings at Rev. Osborn's request; annual meetings of the IMU evolved from the initial assemblies.

The IMU was dedicated to fostering dialogues with other Christian missionaries and churches worldwide. The Rev. William H. Belden, Secretary of the Union in 1890, described it as, "A missionaries' club meeting publicly for one week in every year." According to Rev. Belden the Union was not affiliated with any specific denomination, did not elect delegates and was independent of other missionary organizations. Its sole purpose was for international Christian missionaries to exchange ideas and experiences in order to enhance and expand their own missions and provide support to fellow missionaries in the context of their work. The diffusion of missionary information and the cultivating of relationships among missionaries serving in different countries and representing different churches was one of the principal objectives of the International Missionary Union.

In 1890, the International Missionary Union found a permanent home for its annual meetings thanks to the generosity of Dr. Henry Foster of Clifton Springs, N.Y. In addition to securing a location for the annual meetings, Dr. Foster provided lodging for the missionaries at the Clifton Springs Sanitarium, a facility he owned. In 1891, he placed the sanitarium in trust for "...missionaries and clergymen for the purpose of providing a place where those who have broken down in health can come for repairs at a nominal price." The sanitarium continued to host the IMU meetings throughout its existence except for two instances.

The dissolution of the IMU resulted from the development of other specialized missionary organizations focusing on topics such as agriculture, medicine and education; the financial hardships created by the Great Depression; and the increasing awareness of the need for academic development of international missionaries. On April 7, 1932, the six-member Board of

Control of the International Missionary Union agreed to dissolve the organization effective December 31, 1932. The funds, records and other artifacts of the IMU were passed over to the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.

Sources: from the collection itself.

### **Collection Scope and Content Note**

This collection contains three boxes of records that include photographs, articles, member rolls, pamphlets, minutes and one Syriac language journal.

The photographs depict members of the International Missionary Union, many taken at Clifton Springs, New York during the organization's annual meetings. Dr. Henry Foster, known for his dedication to The Clifton Springs Sanitarium and his fervent belief that he had been visited by the Holy Spirit, provided the Deed of Trust to The International Missionary Union where the organization's annual meetings were held. The bulk of the group photographs in this collection were taken on the steps of the Sanitarium.

Materials in this collection also include member rolls, newspaper articles in Spanish from various Latin American countries, and an article from the New York Times regarding U.S. actions in Nicaragua and Honduras. Minutes of the meetings of The Board of Control of the International Missionary Union

Among the more notable documents in this collection is a letter from the U.S. Department of State to Rev. Henry Strong Huntington regarding economic and political relations between the U.S. and the Dominican Republic. The Deed of Trust from Henry Foster and Mary E. Foster to "The Clifton Springs Sanitarium Company," July 9, 1891 and the original handwritten Constitution of the IMU are also available.

### **Processing**

Materials were placed in new acid free folders and boxes. Three-ring binders that contained member rolls, photographs, annual meeting minutes and the Constitution were placed in new acid free folders and removed from the three-ring containers.

### **Further Sources**

Columbia University offers other material relating to Henry Foster and the Clifton Springs Sanitarium. More information on available material can be found by searching Columbia's Library Catalog, CLIO: <http://clio.columbia.edu/>.

Yale University Divinity School Library houses a small collection of International Missionary Union records, 1902-1911. These can be discovered online at: <http://www.library.yale.edu/div/>.

The papers of Charles Minot and Elva R. Griffith detail their missionary work in South America and include newspaper clippings of the annual meetings of the IMU in Clifton springs, N.Y. The papers are available at: <http://www.pitts.emory.edu/archives/text/mss274.html>.

**Contents List**

Box	Folder	Contents
10S		Photographs, 1896-1908
20S		Photographs [192?]
20S		Newspaper Articles [19??]
20S		Pamphlet, <i>Christrosen</i> [19??]
20S		Journal, Syriac Language, 1849
3	1	Photographs [189?]
3	2	Photograph, 1895
3	3	Correspondence, 1924
3	4	Newspaper Article, 1924
3	5	Administrative Records, 1886-1927
3	6	Administrative Records and Photographs, 1920-1932